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A Brief History of the English Department

Western Kentucky University, 1907-72

by Willson E. Wood

My knowledge of the English Department before 1941 is rather limited; however, I have been able to develop a fairly accurate record from facts given in Dr. Cornette's history and from remembered conversations with Dr. Gordon Wilson and others.

The official ancestor of Western Kentucky University was Western Kentucky State Normal School, established by act of the legislature and Governor Beckham's signature on March 21, 1906. However, because of some litigation it was not opened until January of 1907. According to Dr. Cornette (p. 112), Western opened with a spring term on January 22, 1907, and offered a total of 45 courses, including four in grammar, one in literature, one in English literature, one in Milton, and two in reading and spelling. These courses were taught by three of the nine faculty members named and one unnamed.

Apparently the earliest Western faculty member to teach English was Dr. A. J. Kinnaman, who was employed by Dr. H. H. Cherry to help him plan the new school and to serve as Dean and to teach English, psychology, and pedagogy. He is listed in that first semester program as the teacher of two of the grammar courses. He served as Dean until 1923 and remained as a teacher until 1926. His main work seems to have been in psychology, but I suppose he taught grammar occasionally as long as he was here.

Joining Dr. Kinnaman that first year were the following teachers: Frederick Roman, who taught English Literature and history (apparently he stayed only one year); J.M. Guilliams, who taught grammar, reading and spelling, and some other subjects (he stayed

until 1911); though she was not here that first semester, Annie Marie Egenhoff was employed to teach "expression," (I suppose that was public speaking).

In 1908 Macon A. Leiper was employed to teach English, and later he became the first Head of the English Department (1918-1926). Also that year, J.H. Claggett was employed to teach Shakespeare, Milton, and Dante, which he did until his retirement in 1937. Miss Florence Ragland was employed as librarian that same year, and I understand that she did some teaching in the English Department. Two others who came that same year were Nona Archer, who stayed one year (1908-09), and Mattie Reid, who stayed ten years (1908-1918).

In January of 1908 a young, rural school teacher from Callo-way and Hickman counties arrived in Bowling Green and enrolled as a student at Western. He continued to come between his teaching jobs and was here when Western moved from the Old Southern Normal buildings (where the towers on College Street now stand) to the Hill. I remember hearing him describe how the whole student body marched up the hill, trip after trip, carrying desks, chairs, and library books.¹ That young man was Gordon Wilson, who, shortly after that move, began to teach part-time in the English Department. He was officially listed as a member of the faculty in 1912, was appointed the new Head of the English Department in 1928, the position he held until retirement in 1959. That record of 48 years as teacher and 31 years as Department Head has been matched by only one other person at Western, and very likely will never be approached again.

About the same time that Dr. Wilson came as a student, another young teacher, a Warren County boy, entered Western. That was

¹That move was completed February 4, 1911.

Alfred Leland Crabb, the Nashville educator and novelist. He showed his talent for writing his second year when he became the first editor of the student newspaper, The Elevator. He held that position for two years, 1909 and 1910, then was followed by Dr. Gordon Wilson. Dr. Crabb came back to Western in 1916 as a teacher of psychology and pedagogy. I believe he also taught a course in English occasionally. He became Dean in 1925 and served until 1927, when he joined the faculty of George Peabody College, where he also served as Dean for many years.

In 1913 Finley C. Grise joined the Western faculty as a Latin teacher. According to Dr. Wilson's diary, he had taught Dr. Grise in some Latin courses earlier, and I remember hearing him say once that Dr. Grise was an excellent Latin student. Then he offered the opinion that Grise was also an excellent teacher of Latin but missed his calling when he became Dean. In addition to serving as Dean, Dr. Grise was Head of the Foreign Language Department for many years, and he told me one time that he also served as Head of the English Department for about two years between Dr. Leiper and Dr. Wilson. He apparently did so again while Dr. Wilson was on leave in 1928 and 1929. I find no record that he was ever officially Head, but I can believe that he was acting Head, because I registered for the first time in February of 1929 and had the hottest verbal battle with Dr. Grise I ever had with any teacher or administrator.

From what I can discover from the records available to me, the following people also came to Western or taught here between 1920 and 1959. I am quite sure there were some others, but I cannot prove it.

D.P. Curry taught English and history in the Training School from 1920 to 1924, and probably taught a few late afternoon classes

in the college.¹

Mr. G.C. Gamble was Dean of the College from 1923 to 1925, and did some teaching in the English Department.

Mrs. T.C. Cherry came to the Cherry Brothers Normal in 1896 as teacher of speech and physical culture. She was Miss Bessie Swartz then, but two years later married Mr. T.C. Cherry. I do not know how long she held that first position, but she came to Western in 1923 as teacher of speech and English, the position she held until her retirement in 1947.²

Sue Bell Mason was here one year 1924-25,

Frances Richards came in 1925 and remained until 1963. I believe that her record of 38 years with only time off for work on the M. A. Degree is certainly one of the longest ever made at Western. For many years, in addition to teaching Shakespeare, Kentucky Literature, and various other courses, she was the journalism "department." She also was the sponsor of the College Heights Herald for most of those years.

Lowe Johnson also came in 1925 and divided time between English and history. He was an excellent teacher, but not in good health. He left in 1931.

Susan Riley spent one year with us (1927-28)³ and left because of a mistake made by Dr. Cherry. She later joined the faculty of George Peabody College and in the early 1950's, while I was there, she was serving as Head of their English Department. For many years

¹Several different people taught English or speech in the Training School in the 20's and 30's, and I suppose some of them may have taught a few classes in the College.

²Mrs. Cherry was one of the most fastidious women I ever knew; so it tickled my crazy sense of humor to see her listing in the Western Catalog: Mrs. T.C. Cherry, B.O. (That B.O. of course stood for Bachelor of Oratory).

³One record gives 1925-28, but I believe she was here only one year.

I have known of a story about her leaving from Western. I don't believe it can be verified by any official document, but since I know all parties concerned, I am strongly inclined to believe it. A faculty member who was at Western in 1928 told me the story:

Some time before the end of Dr. Riley's first year, she met Dr. Cherry in a hallway of Van Meter. He stopped and blurted out, "By the way, did I tell you that we will not need you next year?"

"No, you did not," Miss Riley replied.

Continuing then in his usual brusque manner, Dr. Cherry said, "Well, we just won't need you any longer." Then he hurried on to his office. On his way he met his secretary, Miss Mattie McLean, and asked her, "That was Miss So-and-So, I was talking to, wasn't it?"

"No," she answered, "that was Miss Susan Riley."

He had her call Miss Riley into his office the next day, apologized and explained that he mistook her for another lady.

But Miss Riley left Western as soon as she could get away when the Semester ended.

Having known Dr. Riley well during my two years in Nashville, I would say that she accepted Dr. Cherry's apology gracefully and with a straight face, but I would add that I doubt that she ever forgave him. I suspect that if she left among her effects a little black book entitled "Notes on Human Behavior," and you could get hold of that book, you would find there a list of "unpardonable sins," and near the top would be one about impulsive college presidents who fire from the hip without looking.

Ruth Moore (later Perkins) came in 1926 to divide time between English and French, but soon became full time in French,

where she remained until 1942(?).

Sarah Middleton was here from 1928 until 1935.

Tom Brackin came in 1928 and left a year or two later. He is not listed in Dr. Cornette's history, but I know he was here because I had Freshman English with him in 1929.

Emma Stith came in 1928 to teach Children's Literature and Teaching Language in the Grades. She stayed until her retirement in 1962.

Dr. Earl Moore came the next year to start another long career in our department, and he also retired in 1962, but he was not through teaching. He taught for a few years in one of the church schools of the state; then later, after moving to Nashville, he taught in Watkins Institute and various adult education courses. One time when I saw him and asked what he was doing, he replied, "I am teaching a bunch of Nashville plumbers to plumb in good English." I have no doubt that Dr. Moore holds the all time record for number of different courses taught in college. In the summer of 1959, after I had been appointed to take Dr. Wilson's place, I went to him one day with the 1959 catalog and asked him to initial all the courses to indicate who normally taught them. Of the 51 courses in our curriculum at that time, he gave twelve of them to Dr. Moore. I know that he also taught an introductory course in philosophy now and then and that he taught the two Freshman English courses. That made fifteen courses he had to keep up with. I challenge anybody, before or since his day, to try matching that. The only one who has approached it in modern times is Dr. Will Fridy, who, according to my latest count, has taught thirteen different courses.

Frances Anderson came to the History Department in 1930, and taught a class in English occasionally.

James Cornette came in 1930, stayed with us until 1945, when he became Dean at Baylor University. Some years later he became President of West Texas State College and remained in that position until his retirement.

Mrs. Jennie Upton came to the Training School in 1930, moved to the College in 1932, and remained here until her retirement in 1960.

Ophia Brown was here one year, dividing time between English and the Extension Department (1931-32).

Louis Salomon also came in 1931. He left about 1938.

James Sterrett came in 1934 and was the main teacher of speech and dramatics until 1946, when he moved to a similar position at the University of Kentucky.

Julia Neal came about 1940, taught as a graduate assistant for a while and later worked part time, and apparently full time for a year or two. Then she left us, but came back in 1964 and joined the staff at the Kentucky Building, where she stayed until retirement.

Willson Wood came to the Training School in English and Mathematics in 1941. In 1943 and '44 he taught math full time, then in '45 took the senior English program there, and began working part time in the College. In 1947 he moved to the English Department and taught Victorian Literature and Tennyson and Browning and various other courses. A little later he taught the English methods course and advanced grammar. In 1950 he took leave for advanced study, which he did at Peabody and Vanderbilt. While there he did some teaching as a graduate assistant. He returned to Western in 1952, and continued to teach the same courses. He received his Ph.D. Degree in the summer of 1954, and shortly after that was appointed Director of Freshman English. When Dr. Wilson retired in

1959, Dr. Wood was appointed Department Head, a position he held until 1972. In 1964 in the spring semester, he taught at Owensboro an "off-campus course": Introduction to Linguistics, the first one offered by Western bearing the name "linguistics." It soon became one of our popular courses for seniors and graduate students, because the "new grammar" was beginning to show up in the textbooks for grades and high school. Dr. Wood gave up the Headship in 1972, but remained on the teaching staff full time for one more year, then as a part-timer for five more years. He received his last check in August of 1978, almost to the day fifty-two years from the time he received the check for his first month's teaching in Muhlenberg County.

Justine Lynn joined the Department in 1946 and was here, except for one or two short leaves, until 1961.

Mary McCombs came to the Training School in 1946, where she taught elementary or junior high English until 1970, when she came to the College full time. She retired in 1972.

Jane Rae came in 1946, when Dr. Sterrett left, and taught speech and dramatics for one year.

Russell Miller came up from the Business University in 1947 and took over the speech and theatre program. Except for leave to go for a doctorate, he stayed until his death in 1968.

Mrs. Frances Dixon joined the Training School in 1948 to teach speech and coach debating. The next year she began to work part time in our Department; then in 1961 she came full time until Speech and Theatre was made a separate department, and then she went with it and worked there until her retirement.

Dr. D. K. Wilgus, our first professional folklorist, came in 1950 and stayed until 1962, when he took a similar position at the University of California.

Dr. T. O. Hall, who had taught a few classes in the 20's when

he was a student here and had taught a few summer terms in the 30's, moved to Bowling Green in 1957 and divided time between English and Education, where he was teaching veterans occupational guidance and working as a counselor for them. After 1959 he worked with the veterans full-time until retirement.

Dr. Claude Pickard came to Western in 1957 to divide time between English and geography, which he did until 1960, when he went to full-time in geography. Except for time off to go for his doctorate, he has been there ever since.

In the spring of 1959, the English Department consisted of nine regular full-time people: Dr. Gordon Wilson, Head; Dr. Earl Moore; Miss Frances Richards; Miss Emma Stith; Mrs. Jennie Upton; Miss Justine Lynn; Dr. Russell Miller; Dr. D. K. Wilgus; and Dr. Willson Wood. We also had four or five others. Mrs. Wilma Rabold was teaching full time on a temporary basis; Dr. Hall and Mr. Pickard were teaching one or two classes each; Miss Caroline Newberry, who had come to the Training School, was teaching a late afternoon class in our Department. I believe there were one or two others who were either graduate assistants or part-timing on a temporary basis. One of these was probably Mrs. Dixon, who was beginning to work with us most semesters.

In the summer of 1959 there was an indication that our enrollment would increase in the fall; so just before his retirement Dr. Wilson employed three new people: Dr. Lee Little, Dr. Roy O'Donnell, and Mr. Del Palmer. Then Dr. Wilson left us and Dr. Wood took over the Department.

In the fall of 1959 the three men whom Dr. Wilson had employed joined us, and we also got a Miss Chappell (I believe through some arrangement made by someone in administration). That made a regular staff of eleven and four part-timers for a total of fifteen,

since Dr. Moore was on leave. The part-timers were Dixon, Newberry, Rabold, Pickard.

That fall we had a total enrollment of 1891 in 61 classes for an average of 31. The Freshman English 101a (26 sections) averaged 35 and 101b (6 sections) averaged 29. Perhaps we were making some progress in getting the size of these courses reduced. I have just checked my roll book for 1947 and find that I had 38 in 101a, 43 in 101b, 41 in Am. Lit., 29 in Victorian Lit., and 38 in a second 101a, for a total of 189. In those days a class was closed when the students stopped coming. I recall that Dr. Wilson used to utter two short whistles when he discovered that a class was running past 40, but nothing else was said.

In the spring of 1960, Dr. Wood employed Mrs. Edith Curry, part time; Dr. Moore returned; and we got two other people who had worked part-time for Dr. Wilson: Mr. Charles English and Mrs. Mabel Pearson, making a total of 18, because Miss Chappel had left, or was working full time somewhere else.

Since a larger enrollment was anticipated for fall, we employed four new people: Hugh Agee, Jack Fox, Linda Wyman, and Phillip Buchanan. We moved Mrs. Rabold to regular full-time and granted Dr. Little leave. That gave us a full time staff of 14. Dr. Hall and Mr. Pickard were working elsewhere, but we still had seven graduate assistants and part-timers: Charles English, Carol Lockhart, Jane Pfingston, Frances Anderson from history, Edith Curry from city schools, and Frances Dixon and Caroline Newberry from the Training School. That gave us a total staff of 21. That fall we had an enrollment of 2536, an increase of 34% over the year before, but we were still able to hold our averages down in 101a and 101b, partly because we had invented English 100

and let the classes in it go to 40.

In the spring of 1961 we lost Miss Lynn, but we employed four new people and got Mrs. Dixon full time; then in the summer we lost Buchanan and O'Donnell, but Dr. Little came back. So we started the fall semester with seventeen regulars, two part-timers, and three graduate assistants, making a total staff of twenty-two. The new people were Terry Otten, Sara Rodes, Seth Wade, and Robert Wurster.

The enrollment for fall was 3166, an increase of 25%, but we managed to keep our classes to respectable sizes. For both semesters the 101a's averaged 35+ and the 101b's 23+.

In the spring of 1962 we added John Adams and Joseph Boggs; then in the summer Mary Ellen Pitts and Edith Curry. For that fall we employed Lavonne Benson, Randall Capps, Tom Ecker, Edna Laman, Robert Obojski, Gerald Randolph, and Flora Zabar, but we lost Fox, Palmer, Stith, Wade, Wilgus, Dr. Moore retired and Mr. Miller was on leave. That gave us a regular staff of twenty-two, and our eight part-timers and graduate assistants made a total of thirty.

Our enrollment was 3211, an increase of only 1.4%, indicating that our enrollment was leveling off.

In the fall of 1963 we had lost John Adams, Agee, Otten, Randolph, Rodes, Zabar, and Miss Richards had retired. We employed David Doll, Tom Jones, Carol Lockhart, Walter Richards, Michael Patrick, James Wise, and Mrs. Robert Lively and Janet Schwarzkopf came up from the Business University which had joined Western. Also Russell Miller came back. The result was that we had only one more regulars than the fall before, twenty-three. We had only seven part-timers and G. A.'s, making a total of thirty, same as the year before. The part-timers were Sybil Clark, Judy Ecker, Mary Miller,

Miss Ling, Mrs. Matthews (summer only), Alice Power, Suzanne Tuck, and O. J. Wilson.

Our enrollment increased 19% to 3834, but most of the increase was the result of expansion in speech, theatre, philosophy, radio, and TV, all of which were still in the English Department. To take care of the increase in English we had to allow the class size of Eng. 101b to go to 26+ for the two semesters.

In the fall of 1964, we expanded still more in related subjects; for example we developed new courses and employed Dr. Kenneth Clarke in folklore and also added Dr. Mary Clarke to divide time between folklore and English. Dr. Mildred Howard was added in Speech and Theatre; Len Hart replaced David Doll, who left. We heard that we were to have a sizable increase that fall; so we promoted Judy Ecker and Suzanne Tuck to full time and employed nine more new people. These were Hazel Cothran, Howard Doll, Dr. Addie Hilliard, Bonnie Homsley, Dr. George McCelvey, Judith McCleary, Dr. William McMahon, Charles Modlin, and John Spurlock. In addition to David Doll, we lost Dr. Robert Obojski. We had three new graduate assistants (Terry Antonucci, Frank Rossetter and Miss White) and four former ones making a total staff of 42. In the spring we had a total of fifteen new regulars. This was about the same number of new people Dr. Wilson had seen in his thirty years as Head from 1929-1959. The increase in the fall of 1964 jumped to 27% giving us a total enrollment of 4862, but apparently we had guessed right, for our beginning freshman classes averaged 35--and the sophomore courses for the two semesters averaged 22.

One other interesting thing happened that year: the English Department gave birth to the first of what was to be a series of four offsprings. Dr. Ronald Nash and two other new people, along

with our part-timer, Dr. O. J. Wilson, began to develop a new Department of Philosophy and Religion; however, that first year it was called "Philosophy, Instructional Area."

For the fall of 1965 we anticipated another large increase and employed twelve more new people. An anticipated lowering of the teaching load also contributed to our need for more people. I had been telling Dr. Cravens for several years that 15 hrs. was too much for English instructors whose load generally was 80% freshman courses. But he would tell me, "Just keep lowering your class size, and you can get the same result without starting a fight on the part of everybody else who thinks he is overloaded." But shortly after this the fight was on all over the campus for a reduction in load, because we were finding it harder every year to fill our vacancies with people willing to carry 15 hr. loads. So the Faculty Handbook of 1965 announced that the standard teaching load for two semesters would be 27 hrs. The new people in English that fall were Donald DeMeules, Dr. Fred Haas, Kathleen Hickey, Addie Hochstrasser, Wanella Huddleston, Pauline Griffin Jones, Dr. William Koon, Tom Lewis, Dr. Lucretia Morgan, John Reiss, Mary Strahl, Nancy Yarborough; and we moved Mary Miller to full time. We lost Lavonne Benson, Tom Ecker, Len Hart, Bonnie Homsley, Mary Ellen Pitts, and Linda Wyman, leaving us 45 regulars. We had twelve part-timers and G. A.'s. The new ones were Robert Adams, Madeline Chester, Anna Jo Johnson, Jean Koon, Anne Law, Brenda Martin, Nancy Priest, Carol B. Robertson, and Miss Lair added in the spring, and John Johnson (in the summer only).

The enrollment was 5540, an increase of 14%. We were still working towards a goal of 26 to 28 for beginners and 22 to 24 for

102's, and we were now getting close with averages of 30 and 23.

In the fall of 1966, we added James Brown, Wilford Fridy, Wanda Gatlin, Doris Broach, Bardhyl Pogoni, Glee Hume, Carrie Hume, Jon Walz, and we promoted Terry Antonucci, Robert Adams, and Gary Bradford to full time. Also Dr. Agee returned and Dr. O. J. Wilson came back part-time.

We lost Howard Doll, Modlin, Patrick, Wise and Yarborough, leaving us a total of 51 regulars. We also had sixteen part-timers and G. A.'s. The new ones were James Flynn, Ron Gaffney, Miss Gray (spring only), Mr. Harrel, Miss Helm, Horace Kelley, Vernon Knuckles, Miss Lyne, Mrs. Murphy, Linda Longstreth, Miss Riddell, Miss Sharpe, and Miss White.

Our enrollment was up about 10% for a total of 6016. And the average class of beginners had 26 and for both semesters the 102's averaged 24.

! We were now in the greatest period of change in personnel Western has ever known. I remember hearing Dr. Thompson tell the faculty one day that 50% of our entire faculty and staff had been here five years or less. About that same time (1966) he could have said that approximately 75% of the English teachers had been here three years or less. In the three years '64, '65, '66, we lost thirteen regular people and employed or elevated to full time a total of forty-one. In his thirty years Dr. Wilson lost about six people and employed about fifteen. I call those years the time of stability, and I have referred to the 60's as the age of the young and restless.

In 1967 we added Charles Anderson, Miriam Bailey, Gretchen Bradshaw Niva, Whit Combs, Larry Dawson, Zaida Green, and we moved

Brenda Martin and Dorothy McMahon to regular full time (She had been teaching, when needed, some time before this). We lost Cothran, DeMeules, Carrie Hume, Judy Ecker, Hickey, McCleary, and Morgan. Mrs. Lively retired and Mrs. Broach moved to the College of Education. We had 25 part-timers and G. A.'s, making a total staff of 74. The new ones of the 25 were Nell Agee, Miss Arnold, Mr. Cobb, Mr. Denton, Mr. Francis, Mr. Gragg, Mr. Harrison, Miss Herndon, Miss S. Miller, Mr. Tom Miller, Miss Oglesby, Mr. Petrie (summer only), Carol Robertson, Miss Small, Mr. Spear, and Mrs. Pat Taylor.

We had a 21% increase in enrollment for a total of 7310. This was the largest ever up to that time and probably will stand as the record for several more years, because the English Department gave birth to another department for 1968, another one in 1970, and still another in 1972.

We had our largest group of beginners that fall, 100 sections averaging about 30 per class, and we held our 102's to 23+ for the two semesters.

That summer (1968) we had two noteworthy events. Dr. Agee applied for an N. D. E. A. Institute and gained approval for it. It ran for the summer and enrolled 29 students, to whom Drs. Agee, Little, McMahon, and Mr. Wurster taught three courses: 401, 404, and 503.

The other event was that we began to plan and organize a new department, Speech and Theatre, to become activated in the fall. Dr. Randall Capps was chosen to head it, and to assist him, he took Dr. Mildred Howard, Dr. O. J. Wilson, Mrs. Dixon, Mr. Combs, Mrs. Strahl, Mrs. Taylor, and Mr. Billy Parsons was employed in place of Dr. Russell Miller, who had died. They also took with them approximately 650 students.

That fall we employed eight new teachers in English and the related subjects which we still had.

These new people were Marvin Bowman, John Briney, Charles Guthrie, Dr. Roy Miller, Carroll Hart, Tae Guk Kim, Dr. Ahmes Malik, and Dr. Frank Steele, who became Director of Freshman English the next year. In addition to those who went to Speech and Theatre, we lost Dr. Green and Boggs and Jones (on leave), giving us a total of 46 regulars. We also had 26 part-timers and G. A.'s for a total staff of 72. This was only two less than the year before Speech and Theatre left us. There were three reasons for this. One was that we were expanding in journalism and radio and TV. Another was that we wanted to be sure to hold our own on the size of those beginning classes. A third reason was that full time professors and graduate faculty were reduced to 24 hrs. for two semesters.

The new part-timers were Miss Belden, Miss Belk, Miss Bozarth, Miss Jackson, Tom Johnson, Mrs. Kearney, Miss Lewis, Mr. Mefford, Miss Nelson, Mrs. Osborne, Mrs. Peggy Steele, and Mrs. Jean Thomason.

Our total enrollment was 6550, about 750 less than the year before. In addition to the loss of Speech and Theatre, for some unknown reason our beginning freshmen group was down about 485. Our average size for beginners was 25+ and for 102's for the year was 23.

In the fall of 1969 we expected no increase in freshmen, but we were still expanding in related subjects and were reducing the size of some of our other classes. Also the reduction to a standard load of 24 hrs. was applied to all teachers. So we employed eleven new people, and Mr. Jones came back. We lost Agee, Bailey, Hart, Lewis, Tuck, and Mr. Spurlock took leave, giving us

a total of 52 regulars. We also had 30 part-timers for a total staff of 82, the all time high up to 1972. The new full-time people were Charmaine Allmon Mosby, Dr. Margaret Bruner, Dr. Nancy Davis, Dr. Joseph Glaser, Ben Jones, Dr. Lynwood Montell, Russell Moore, Jonnell Rowland, Walker Rutledge, Dr. Robert Ward, and Dr. Wesolowski. The new part-timers were Mr. Abril from Ecuador, Mrs. Belasco, Mrs. Bond, Miss Buren, Miss Drury, Miss Gipson, Mr. Hill, Miss Idom, Miss Locke, Miss McAllister, Miss Parker, Paul Schumann, Miss Satterly, Miss Gabriella Sung from Taipei, Miss Swanks, and Mr. Wall.

The enrollment was 6638, only a slight increase (88) over the previous fall; of these, beginning freshman accounted for 59. This time we got our class sizes where we wanted them, 23+ for beginners and 22+ for 102's.

In the summer of 1970 we began to arrange for a new department to be called Mass Communication and to contain journalism, TV, radio, and photography. We lost to them Walter (Jody) Richards, Robert (Bob) Adams, Dr. Malik, Dr. Kim, Dr. Haas, Mr. Anderson, Mr. Bowman, Mr. Wesolowski, and Mr. Schumann, a graduate assistant in photography. Mr. Richards left us but we employed Mr. David Whitaker from the Courier Journal. - Mr. Anderson took leave for advanced study, but we employed two new people, Keith Jackson and William Platt. Dr. Malik was to continue teaching in English about half-time. Also Dr. Haas and Dr. Kim left us. So we launched the new department with seven full time regulars and two part-timers, not counting the acting head. We had not been able to find a head who satisfied all requirements; so Dr. Wood was appointed acting head for that first year. We set up a curriculum of 25 courses, and I

estimate an enrollment of about 400. They also produced the College Heights Herald and the Talisman, made and developed pictures, and did some educational television work. Obviously they prospered, for five years later the catalog lists a faculty of twelve people and a curriculum of 41 courses, with a 33 hr. major and a 21 hr. minor.

That fall the English Department took Mrs. Law and Miss McCombs full time from the Training School; Gretchen Bradshaw became Mrs. Niva and is still with us; Pat Taylor began dividing time between English and Speech and Theatre; Dr. John Pollock came to divide time between us and Education; Mr. Boggs came back after advanced study; and we employed Dr. John Lewter and Dr. Joseph Survant, giving us 43 regulars. Besides the Mass Communications people, we had lost Dawson, Koon, and Richards; Wurster and the two Clarkes were on leave, and Miss Hochstrasser had retired. We had 28 part-timers, including twelve new ones. These were Miss Allen, Mr. Atkinson, Mrs. Jean Conway (now Moisen), Miss Garrison, Miss Gorton, Mrs. Nancy Moore, Miss Nealy, Miss Nicolson, Dr. John Pollock, Mrs. Mary Ann Reiss, Miss St. Clair, and Mr. Shutt. These made a total of 71 people teaching English. We had 255 classes with a total enrollment of 5874. There were 97 sections of beginners averaging 25- and for both semesters the 102's averaged 23-.

In the summer we had Mr. Warren for the summer only.

In the fall of 1971 we added Mrs. Catherine Ward, and back from leave were the Clarkes, Mr. Spurlock, and Mr. Wurster. We lost Antonucci and Briney, and Miss Glee Hume retired, leaving us 45 regulars. We also had 29 part-timers for a total staff of 74. The new part-timers were Miss Bowling, Mr. Crady, Mr. Craig, Miss

Dinwiddie, Miss Jobe, Miss Muffett, Miss Phillips, Miss Searcy, Miss Sharp, and Mr. Utley.

We taught 260 classes with a total enrollment of 5969. There were 98 sections of beginners, averaging 25+. For both semesters the 102's averaged 21-.

In the spring of 1972, we began planning for two more events in the history of the Department. Because of increasing interest in folklore and other cultures, we began to think about another new department, but for the time being would call it a Center for Intercultural and Folk Studies. It was to be an inter-departmental group with the English Department furnishing most of the teachers and continuing to be the main supervising control. Dr. Montell was to be the Director, and he would be joined by Dr. Kenneth Clarke, Dr. Mary Clarke, Joe Boggs, and Charles Guthrie would divide time between English and this group. Also Dr. Donald Tuck, Dr. John Peterson, and J. E. Jones would divide time between the new group and other departments. Ms. Camilla Collins was a new employee and Mrs. Jean Thomason worked part-time. I believe that after that first year this group operated as an independent unit, except for cooperation with the other departments in the matter of scheduling teachers who worked two places. As a result of this move, the English Department lost two full time people, lost part-time three more, and lost another one of our part-timers. We also lost Hilliard, McCombs, Pogoni, and Rowland. To replace some of these we employed Dr. Hoyt Bowen, Dr. James Flynn, and Mrs. Frances Fields.

The other event of the year was that Dr. Wood returned to full time teaching and Dr. James Heldman was employed as the new

Head. This made a total of 40 full time regulars. Counting our people who taught some in folklore and other departments as part-timers, we had 31 part-timers. The new ones were Mrs. Burford, Miss Burks, Mr. Greenwell, Mr. Keeton (summer only), Mrs. Frances Perdue, Miss Relihan, Miss Tarpley, Mrs. Tomazic, and Mrs. Walls.

We had a total enrollment, including folk studies, of 5766, a drop of about 200. Actually there was a slight increase in upper-class people, for the freshman decrease was 241. I suspect that resulted from the proliferation and growing popularity of community colleges. We had 95 sections of 101's (no pre Freshman English courses this time), averaging 24-. There were 35 sections of 102, averaging 18+. Really, since I have counted the folklore registration in with ours, I should also count their staff members who are full time or part time in English. That makes a total staff of 44 full time and 33 part-timers. So with an enrollment of 5766, the teacher student ratio was one to 95-.*

This matter of teacher-to-student ratio has always been a concern for English teachers, and for me personally ever since my first three years as a high school teacher when I was in the building seven hours a day, five days a week. That meant 8:00 to 4:00 with an hour off for lunch when one did not draw noon duty. There were seven periods of 50 minutes each with ten minute breaks. I taught six classes, all different courses, and kept a study hall my seventh period. I believe my classes averaged about 20, running from about 35 in the seventh grade down to about 15 in the 12th. So I had a student load of about 180. That was not uncommon in those days. We just didn't go out much at night. There was no reason to go out--our salaries were a little under \$900 a year.

*In figuring this I counted part-timers one-half load each.

Beginning about 1955 I became very active in the Kentucky Council of Teachers of English, which was made up largely of secondary teachers. A perennial concern of that council was the teaching load of a secondary teacher of English. The situation, though, was much better than my own early experience--I believe five classes with a student load of about 130 to 150 was quite common by then. For several years we set a goal of 125; then some years later we began to talk about an ideal of four classes with no more than 100 students.

About this same time the college teachers whose work load was made up mostly of freshman courses began to beg for some relief. I mentioned earlier in this history my conversations about this with Dr. Cravens, and stated that without a hope of fewer classes I began to reduce the class sizes. I am going to present some statistics on our success. My first year as department head the average student load was 151+ in five classes, and of course for the instructors of freshmen, it was much larger; for example, a teacher who had two 101a's, two 101b's and a 102 had a student load of 164. As bad as it was, though, that was progress; for the year before I became department head I had a load of 189 one semester. Five years later we had whittled the average for the whole department down to 127. About that time the university granted us a 3 hr. drop to 27 for two semesters; so our student load continued to drop until 1968 we stood at 111. Then we had a further reduction in hours to a standard load of 24, and in 1969 the student load dropped to 99. It popped up a little in 1970 to 103, I think because the journalism and TV people had left us with their small classes. We continued to work at a goal of 100, and hit it exactly in 1971;

then because of a sudden drop in enrollment it came down to 95 in the fall of 1972. I think a load of four 3-hr. classes with a total enrollment of about 100 is just right for a department that does not lend itself well to large lecture groups, and in which there is always a large amount of paper work. However, I believe that an English teacher ought to do some of his preparation and paper work at home and should spend 12 to 15 hours a week working with individuals in his office. I don't believe that two or three hours a week in class and a string of red marks on a theme will do very much for the writing ability of the average student. He needs some one-to-one, face-to-face, explanations of what the problems are and how to solve them.

One other comment I would like to make is about the extremely wild turnover in staff during much of the time I was department head. I don't believe that it was because I was a hard task-master or because I insisted on seeing what was going on in the classrooms. I did have a rule that every new teacher got observed by the Director of Freshman English, the Graduate Advisor, or myself one or more times until we were reasonably sure that we knew what was happening in that classroom. Sometimes we were able to help the teacher, and sometimes we learned some new tricks to put in our own kits. In only a few cases did we find the performance so poor that we could not keep the teacher, and then we almost always waited and observed a second year to be sure. In only one case did I ever have a strong opposition to my visits. I told him quickly what he could do about it. He took the hint and left the state.

According to my count up to 1972 Western had 141 regular English teachers and 112 graduate assistants, part-timers, and people

divided between our department and another. Thirty-six of the regulars and about a half-dozen part-timers were employed between 1907 and 1959. That means that I employed about 103 regulars and close to a hundred others during my thirteen years. Of that 141, ninety-eight were not here at the end of 1972. Of this 98, nineteen that I can count have retired, fifteen moved into other departments, and three died. That leaves 61 that disappeared, quit, got fired, or are unaccounted for. Actually, I should reduce that number to 45 because about 15 or 16 of these were here long ago, and I don't know what became of most of them. I will say that of that 45 only about five actually got fired or beat us to the draw with a quick resignation. Several others left with a lot of encouragements to go, and some others went because there was no encouragement to stay. The shortest tenure anybody had with me was so short I didn't even count him among the total 141. We interviewed a man who according to all reports was an excellent teacher, but in doing some checking we learned he had worked at several places, usually one or two years in a place. We knew, of course, that something was wrong, and after two or three telephone calls, I found one former employer who would tell the whole truth. Our good-looking doctor was an alcoholic. After two or three conversations with other people, with him, and among ourselves, we decided to try him, largely because he was at the time earning his living as a baggage handler at a large bus station, and because his wife and daughter had left him until he could get straightened out, and also his parents had been recently killed by a drunk driver. So he had every reason to swear off and stay off. We told him that we knew everything and discussed it freely with him. He, of course, maintained that he was

through with liquor forever. We knew we were gambling on poor odds, but decided to give him a try. He came to B. G. and rented an apartment a couple of weeks before school opened, called me, and invited me to come to see him, but I was ill at the time and invited him to come to see me. He didn't come. He did come to two general faculty meetings, but didn't show up for registration. The first day of classes, about 9:00 a.m. Dr. Cravens called me and told me that the campus policeman found our man that morning trying to park his car, but was so drunk he couldn't manage it. So he had taken him to his apartment and got a student to drive the doctor's car there. Dr. Cravens told me to call him early the next morning and tell him to see him before going to class. I did so very early the next morning and told him what Dr. Cravens had said. He asked, "Bad news, I take it?" I replied, "I don't know; he offered no indication of the nature of the news." About 9:00 that morning Dr. Cravens called me and reported that the man had called him at 8:00 and resigned over the telephone. The University accepted his resignation in writing and sent him a check for one month. I heard no more about him until one day about the end of the semester my phone rang and it was our alcoholic. He said, "I am still in town; I have been writing a book and now have it finished, but I didn't want to leave town without calling you and telling you to go to hell." I finally figured out what injustice I had done him. It probably was that I had caused him to lose that job at the bus station.

Well, I don't cry much over things like that. I just remember some of the great teachers I have seen, happily dispensing their wares in our classrooms. There is one whom I visited several times

because I just couldn't believe anybody could be that good. I used to say I don't know what kind of animal she is, but a classroom is certainly her natural habitat.

There are a few other matters I should relate before closing this brief history.

Dr. Lowell Harrison asked me recently how the English Department handled the rather abrupt fluctuations in enrollment during and immediately after World War II. At that time I was in the Training School and knew pretty well what was going on, or at least I can offer some educated guesses. In the first place, money was scarce, the department was badly overloaded at the beginning of the period, and when the drop in enrollment came, it afforded some welcome relief. Also Dr. Wilson had begun the practice of using two or three part-timers when the enrollment demanded it. I suspect these people did lose their work for a year or so. But then I understand that the service men who were sent here for some special training also took some English courses, and the student load went back up; also some of the English teachers at the Training School went over to the college to teach late afternoon classes.

During the war mathematics teachers became very scarce, and I was shifted to full time math in the Training School when Miss Sue Howard was moved to the college. I also taught a late afternoon class of Air Corps Math in the College. In 1945 I shifted again to full-time English, and also taught a late afternoon class of Freshman English in the college.

After the War, money was still scarce, and though the enrollment was increasing, Dr. Wilson employed only one additional teacher in 1946, and in 1947 he got only a replacement for a teacher who had retired. The class size went very high; I recall (since I was that 1947 replacement) that I had a student load of 189 that first semester. I am sure that we also used all available part-timers.

I am sure that some people would say that Dr. Wilson was a slave-driver because he did not find some way to reduce our loads. There were two reasons why he did not. One was that he was highly patriotic and would not fight the administration for more money when dollars were so scarce. The other was that he was such a workhorse himself that he did not realize how overloaded the rest of us were.

When I became Department Head in 1959, I began to increase our backlog of part-timers, and especially encouraged graduate students to do some teaching. I had already realized how important these people were in helping us to meet the fluctuations in enrollment. Also as Director of Freshman English during the last few years of Dr. Wilson's headship, I had learned that we needed more extra people in the fall because there was considerable drop in enrollment at the middle of the year. So our part-timers proved to be a blessing every year and especially during the 60's when our enrollment fluctuated wildly, as follows:
1961 up 25%; 1962 = 1.4%; 1963 = 19%; 1964 = 27%; 1965 = 14%;
1966 = 10%; 1967 = 21%. That last year we had twenty-five

part-timers and graduate assistants, which meant that an unexpected fluctuation of several hundred students did not bother us, or change the size of our classes very greatly.

Another thing that made it possible for me to survive those rapidly changing times was the cooperation of the administrators, particularly Dean Hatcher and Vice-President Cravens. They decided after a time that it was no longer necessary to get approval from both of them for every move that had to be made; so they told me to take care of the registration and employment of part-timers, then report to them the changes and additions after it was over. They also got other departments to report to them any unused classrooms so that I could get my extra classes located. Another advantage helped me to get through those difficult years--that was the fact that I had some very excellent assistants. Dr. Hugh Agee served as Director of Freshman English from 1966 to 1969; then Dr. Frank Steele succeeded him and continues to serve in that capacity. Also in 1969 Dr. Lee Little was appointed Graduate Advisor; he and Dr. Steele took over the supervision of graduate assistants and assisted me in supervising new teachers. To keep us all straight and to preserve my sanity on many occasions we had one of the three best secretaries on the campus, Mrs. Nelda Steen.

A significant part of the life of every department through the years has been the departmental club. From the early years they have been encouraged and supported by the administration. Between 1922 and 1937 sixteen of these were organized. The M.A. Lieper English Club, made up of faculty, majors and minors

was the second one, organized in 1924. It was named for Dr. Lieper, who had been Department Head for seven years at the time. It continued to be active for nearly 50 years. Until about the early 60's it was very active and well attended by both faculty and students. The academic climate under Dr. Wilson's guidance was such that any English major who failed to attend felt guilty and embarrassed, and normally a faculty member who missed a meeting managed to let Dr. Wilson know why, but as far as I know, he never told anybody that attendance was required. But something happened in the 60's. It became smart not to do what one was supposed to do. Also the organization of other clubs and the ever-widening opportunity for a social life outside the academic area took many people out. I think a third reason was that the new Head failed to impress upon new students and new faculty the importance of the departmental club. He simply took it for granted that they would know, but it did not work. So in the 60's interest waned, and because of the popularity of organizations with Greek letter names, our majors and minors, graduate students and faculty became interested in forming a chapter of Sigma Tau Delta, the national organization of students of English. For several years the Lieper English Club maintained an organization, but began to join the Sigma Tau Deltas for programs. Some time in the early 70's the two united and continued as the Pi Iota Chapter of Sigma Tau Delta. This group continues to be active but has never become as much a part of the English Department as the Leiper English Club was in the 1940's and 1950's.

In two periods of its history the English Department has

been significantly involved in Western's Graduate program. According to Dr. Cornette, a graduate program was started at Western in 1931 but was terminated in 1936 by resolution passed by the Council on Public Higher Education. After five years it was reinstated for a Master of Arts in Education only.

During that six-year period in the 30's Western awarded 114 M.A. Degrees. The greatest number of these had majors in Education (62). The second highest number had M.A.'s in English (23). Some other academic departments had sixteen or fewer.

When the Master's in Education was added back in 1941, several of the academic departments, including English, were allowed to offer what was called subject matter minors of six to nine hours. According to Mrs. Chris Jenkins in the Graduate College Office, the Council on Higher Education passed a resolution in 1963 authorizing the state schools to offer academic M.A.'s. In 1966 Western's Academic Council approved the M.A. proposals presented by the English and History Departments. In 1964 the Board of Regents established the Graduate School of Western, but no significant changes were made in the offerings at that time. On February 6, 1966, the Kentucky General Assembly designated Western as a university and changed its name to Western Kentucky University.

As early as 1961 Western had been offering as much as twelve hours of graduate work above the Master's degree, a part of which could be taken in English. Later this was raised to twenty-four and finally to thirty to qualify teachers for Rank I. About this same time, arrangements were made with George Peabody College for

our graduate students to earn an Ed. S. Degree based on thirty hours above the M.A. Several people in the English Department earned this degree. I have heard that this is no longer done, but I understand that our M.A. program is still strong.

No story of the English Department could be complete without some further notice given to Dr. Gordon Wilson, Sr., who was Department Head from 1928 to 1959. I knew Dr. Wilson from May of 1928 until April of 1970; so I believe I am qualified to make some comments about him and his work, in addition to what I have already written above. He gave more time and attention to his job than any other person I have known, and also carried on many other activities. He was a regular seven-to-five man, five days a week. He allowed himself a reduction in teaching load of only three hours a semester for being department head, until the last year or two of his career. He also made more high school commencement speeches than anybody else, wrote articles on Kentucky folklore for the weekly newspapers of the state, studied birds until he became the leading ornithologist of Western Kentucky, did lots of camping, and kept most meticulous records of everything he did.

Dr. Wilson kept one or two research projects going all the time. One of these was a several-year study of interesting dialects, words, expressions, and figures of speech of this area, particularly Edmonson County. An idea of the importance of this work can be gained from the two paragraphs from a letter which I received from Dr. Frederick G. Cassidy, Director of a study made by the American Dialect Society looking to the publication of a Dictionary of American Regional English. The letter is dated

from the University of Wisconsin, February 2, 1968, which was shortly after Dr. Cassidy had been here to get a copy of Dr. Wilson's work.

I should like to thank you personally for the help that you gave to Professor Wilson and me through the work of Mrs. Steen. It was most timely and Mrs. Steen's quiet efficiency made the job go much faster while she was able to help. Between the three of us we were able to photocopy 407 pages--Professor Wilson's entire file of 8500 items. This will be of inestimable value to the Dictionary, especially as it is so well documented. I don't think any area will be better represented than that of Mammoth Cave.

My visit was both pleasant and fruitful. Everyone I met seemed most hospitable and helped wherever they could. I hope that my visit indicated to anyone who was not already aware of it how valuable and how deserving of support is Professor Wilson's work. I hope further that the means may be found for him to put his material in the most accessible order. He should also be encouraged to keep on publishing them.

That letter certainly speaks for itself. I can add that I considered Dr. Wilson a most remarkable man, and I happen to know that for most of his academic life he was the most sadly underpaid and underappreciated faculty member I have known. I have heard two other people who knew him as well or better than I say that he had the most brilliant mind in the most different ways of all the people they had ever known.

One could ride with him across Kentucky, and he could give a running lecture on the geology, zoology, and history of the land along the way; or one could stand in a forest with him while a dozen species of birds chirped overhead, and he would identify by sound every one of them as fast as he could check them off on a card he carried.

He could meet a student he had had in class some two or three years before, call his name, and generally tell him what seat he

had occupied. The second or third time he met a class he could call the roll without looking at his rollbook, or usually he did not call a roll, but glance over his class and jot down the initials of the absent members.

He could attend a meeting of people from different states, and after hearing any one of them talk could usually tell that person's home state and in a few instances I have known him to even indicate the section of the home state. After forty years of acquaintance, he never ceased to amaze me.

One other comment I will have to offer. Dr. Wilson lived for nearly eleven years after I succeeded him as department head, and during that time, though I was closely associated with him, he never once offered a suggestion about how I should run the department. One time, early in that eleven-year period I asked him what he would do about a certain problem that came up, and he replied that I knew the circumstances better than he and could make the decision without help. But he will never know how much help he was to me. During my thirteen years his spirit never left me helpless.

I have reviewed the years with interest and fond memories, and I hope that the errors may be excused and that the facts presented may prove of some value and interest to future readers.